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In Common

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Review of The Common Curriculum Completed

The review committee for *The Common Curriculum* completed its review and submitted its recommendations for changes to *The Common Curriculum* to the ministry on June 27, 1994. *The Common Curriculum* is currently being revised on the basis of these recommendations.

The Common Curriculum was first released in February 1993, and a version for parents and the general public was issued in September 1993. Both versions were intended as working documents, to be revised on the basis of the responses to them.

Beginning in June 1993 and continuing through the fall and winter of 1993-94, the ministry invited interested individuals and groups to comment on *The Common Curriculum*. The review committee, which was established in September 1993, was made up of representatives of the Ontario Teachers' Federation and its affiliates, the Ontario supervisory officers' associations, and the ministry. Research leadership and expertise were provided by Dr. Lorna Earl, Research Director,

Board of Education for the City of Scarborough. The committee's task was to analyse the written responses that were received in both French and English from educators and the public and to make recommendations for revisions to *The Common Curriculum*.

The ministry received 545 written responses, 455 in English and 90 in French. All the responses were summarized and recorded in an electronic database. The committee read and discussed the responses and summaries and produced reports outlining all the comments, including those on particular topics such as antiracism and ethnocultural equity.

During the spring of 1994, the review committee began to develop tentative recommendations on the basis of the reports. The recommendations were revised at each meeting as further responses were received. Responses continued to arrive after the deadline of May 1, 1994. Responses that arrived late were summarized and recorded in the electronic

database in the order in which they had been received.

During July and August 1994, a revision team made up of ministry staff and three members of the review committee revised *The Common Curriculum* on the basis of the recommendations of the review committee. In making the revisions, the revision team made use of the summaries of the responses in the database, the reports produced by the review committee, and the original responses, as well as the recommendations developed by the review committee.

The revised document will be released for distribution in December 1994.

Editors of **In** Common

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In Common is a newsletter produced by the Ministry of Education and Training to communicate information about the implementation of *The Common Curriculum*, Grades 1-9 and to encourage feedback from schools and their communities. *In Common* will be produced approximately every two months.

Cette publication est également offerte en français sous le titre suivant : *En commun*.

Recommendations of the Review Committee

The following is a summary of the recommendations made by the review committee for revising *The Common Curriculum*.

The committee recommended changes to the content of *The Common Curriculum* as well as to its structure and language. The committee also recommended that clear connections be established among the versions of *The Common Curriculum*. In order to establish these links in the December 1994 version, the ministry should:

- demonstrate the revised document's continuity with the February and September 1993 versions by:
 - maintaining the general organization of the September 1993 version;
 - using plain language as in the September 1993 version;
 - maintaining the general content of the February 1993 version;
 - maintaining the substance of the outcomes of the other two versions but reducing the number of these outcomes;
 - describing the differences between the 1993 and the 1994 versions;
 - emphasizing the continued importance of the principles of education and Ontario's commitment to accountability, excellence, equity, and partnership in education;
- establish a clear link between *The Common Curriculum* and other ministry documents by:
 - identifying and explaining the purpose, relevance, and use of existing provincial curriculum guidelines, policy documents, and resource documents;
 - describing clearly the links between *The Common Curriculum* and the provincial standards in mathematics and language;

- emphasizing, in the French-language version, the importance of the document *Aménagement linguistique en français, 1994*.

In the area of content, the committee recommended that, in the revised document, the ministry:

- provide acknowledgement of sources of ideas and recommendations for the revision by:
 - providing references for research and sources to ensure that the origins of the concepts upon which the document is based are clearly indicated;
 - acknowledging the groups and individuals that responded;
 - acknowledging the review committee and describing the review process;
- focus on the importance of partnerships in education by:
 - identifying the partners, namely, parents and guardians, students, educators, and the community;
 - making clear that education is a responsibility that must be shared by all the partners;
 - identifying the roles of the ministry, school boards, and schools;
 - emphasizing the need for collaboration between the school and community, among students, parents, and teachers, and among teachers;
 - outlining the students' responsibility for their own learning;
- provide a strong rationale by:
 - outlining current thinking about learning and planned change;
 - defining and discussing the concepts of outcomes-based learning and integrated learning and outlining their use in the document and their link to the essential learning outcomes;
 - describing the impact of social, economic, and technological changes;
 - recognizing the need for education that will respond to a rapidly changing world, as well as the limitations of the traditional education model, including traditional school structures;
 - recognizing the need to maintain those practices that are still effective;
 - recognizing the need for high expectations for all students;
 - highlighting Ontario's commitment to accountability, excellence, equity, and partnership;
- clarify the meaning of the term "common" by:
 - explaining that the outcomes are common for all students in all Ontario schools;
 - explaining that the content of the program, assessment and evaluation procedures, and teaching and learning strategies used should vary to assist all students, including students with special needs, to achieve the outcomes;
 - indicating that school boards and schools may add supplementary outcomes in addition to the outcomes required in the document;
 - emphasizing the importance of equity for all;
- focus on the importance of the principles of education on which the document is based by:
 - stating clearly the purpose of the principles of education, which is to guide classroom and school practices;
 - describing an effective learner and showing how such a learner will profit from achieving the essential learning outcomes in Part II of the document;
 - explaining the implications of an outcomes-based approach for classroom and school practices and organization;

- explaining the implications of integrated learning for classroom and school practices and organization;
- highlighting the need for shared values;
- highlighting the importance of experiential learning;
- describing clearly procedures for student assessment and evaluation as well as the manner of reporting on their progress;
- explaining the importance of encouraging all students to reflect on their own learning;
- clarify the status of the four program areas by:
 - indicating clearly that the organization of schools and school programs into the four program areas – Arts; Language; Mathematics, Science, and Technology; and Self and Society – is recommended but not required;
 - addressing the need for integration within and among the four program areas;
 - stating clearly that the specific learning outcomes do not belong solely in any one program area;
 - explaining the importance of balanced programming involving all program areas in each year of the child's education.

The committee recommended that, in revising the structure and language of *The Common Curriculum*, the ministry:

- make the continuity of the content clearly evident throughout the document by:
 - providing a clear, logical structure and using plain language throughout the document;
 - providing strong textual and visual connections between and among the sections of the document;
- use a structure, style, and language that are accessible to everyone by:
 - using plain, inclusive language;

- including clear definitions of essential terms and using the terms consistently;
- using graphics and visual aids;
- providing a user's guide;
 - describe the learning outcomes clearly and effectively by:
 - including fewer outcomes than in the earlier versions of the document;
 - including examples with the specific learning outcomes to clarify their meaning and providing guidance on how they may be achieved;
 - stating the outcomes in a clear, consistent manner;
 - ensuring that the continuity and sequence of outcomes for Grades 3, 6, and 9 are appropriate;
 - ensuring that the outcomes are appropriate to the age of the students;
 - describing the general learning outcomes in terms that are not specific to any program area and placing them under the essential learning outcomes in Part II of the document;
 - including the specific learning outcomes in Part III of the document, under each of the program areas;
 - displaying the specific learning outcomes on a horizontal grid, as in the February 1993 version,

to show the progression through Grades 3, 6, and 9; - using graphics to show the connections between the essential learning outcomes, general learning outcomes, and specific learning outcomes.

The committee also recommended that:

- the 1994 version of *The Common Curriculum* include a letter from the Minister, a preface, a user's guide, an introduction, a glossary of terms, a bibliography, and a list of acknowledgements;
- the body of the document be divided into three parts as follows: Part I would outline the principles of education; Part II would list the essential outcomes that serve as a focus for the entire school program; and Part III would list the program areas and their specific learning outcomes;
- the ministry strongly encourage students to reflect on their thinking and learning;
- the ministry stress the importance of the following: equity; good citizenship; community service activities; entrepreneurship; health and safety at home, school, and the workplace; information and media literacy; and the appropriate use of technology.

A Word from the Huron-Perth Roman Catholic Separate School Board

This fall the Huron-Perth County Roman Catholic Separate School Board will introduce a new system for reporting student progress in Grades 7, 8, and 9. A teacher's manual and a student profile are currently being prepared.

The new progress report, which will be produced by computer, will not only report on students' progress in achieving the learning outcomes outlined in

The Common Curriculum and the board's statement of direction, but also show the common assessment criteria used and provide opportunities for students' self-evaluation and parents' comments.

For more information, please contact John McCauley, Superintendent of Curriculum, by telephone at (519) 345-2440 or by fax at (519) 345-2449.

Provincial Implementation Committee Established

When the revised version of *The Common Curriculum* is released in December 1994, there will be a renewed emphasis on implementation throughout the province. The implementation period for *The Common Curriculum* began in September 1993, and the ministry expects full implementation to be under way in all schools by September 1996.

The ministry has, therefore, established a provincial implementation committee chaired by Joanne Zywine, Superintendent of Instructional Services, Halton Board of Education. The committee's membership has not been finalized but it will include representatives of the following groups:

- parents
- business
- labour
- teacher education institutions
- school board trustees' organizations
- supervisory officers' associations
- the Ontario Teachers' Federation and its affiliates

The mandate of the implementation committee is to:

- consider the results of the review of *The Common Curriculum* and advise the ministry on the viability of the proposed revisions;
- examine implementation issues that were raised in the submissions received through the review and revision process;
- identify exemplary practices currently being used in schools and school boards;
- develop and recommend appropriate activities to be used as part of an effective provincial implementation strategy;

- lead, co-ordinate, and advise on the implementation of *The Common Curriculum*.

The committee met for the first time on June 29, 1994, to receive and discuss the report containing the recommendations of the review committee and to begin to identify building blocks for implementation. The meeting was attended by the Minister of

Education and Training, Dave Cooke, who announced the establishment of a \$1.9 million Curriculum Innovation Fund for the implementation of *The Common Curriculum*.

The implementation committee will continue its work throughout the fall and will submit its recommendations to the ministry by December 1994.

With Thanks ...

The ministry wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the following persons who participated in the review committee for *The Common Curriculum*.

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Association des agents et agents de supervision franco-ontariens

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Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario

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